

To the Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Rural District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report as Medical Officer of Health for the year 1896.

The population and area of the District were given in my predecessor's Report for the year 1894.

PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY.

I trust that in the near future the District Council may be able to provide a reliable supply of water to the inhabitants of Purton and Cricklade. Both places are obtaining their household supplies from doubtful sources at present. Property owners in Wootton Bassett are gradually adopting the supply provided by the Council. Outside the Towns, the country people obtain their supplies from pits and shallow wells; in times of heavy rain these are polluted by surface water. A liberal supply of pure water constitutes one of the safeguards of the health of a district.

DRAINAGE.

I have no particular comment to make on the drainage of the district. Old fashioned privies are gradually being done away with.

CONDITION OF COTTAGES.

Most of the cottages in the District are very old, and contain no more than two bedrooms, in many instances only one, the cubic-space allowance is therefore limited, and overcrowding to a greater or less extent must necessarily occur. Many cottages are also unprovided with fireplaces in any of their bedrooms. The newer cottages are generally good.

STREAMS.

The stream at Hunt Mill was said to be offensive. I have passed the place at all hours of the day and night but have never been able to distinguish it. An analysis of the water would determine if it contained sewage matter or not. The residents of this locality obtain their drinking water from a spring of water near, of excellent quality.

VACCINATION.

I am much surprised to note the very small number of primary vaccinations in this District. Parents will not go to the trouble of taking their children to the Vaccination Stations, apart from any prejudice to vaccination, if the Guardians do not enforce the Act.

BAKEHOUSES AND SLAUGHTER-HOUSES

Have been carefully inspected, and are in a satisfactory condition. No complaint has been received concerning either.

PERIODIC INSPECTION OF DISTRICT.

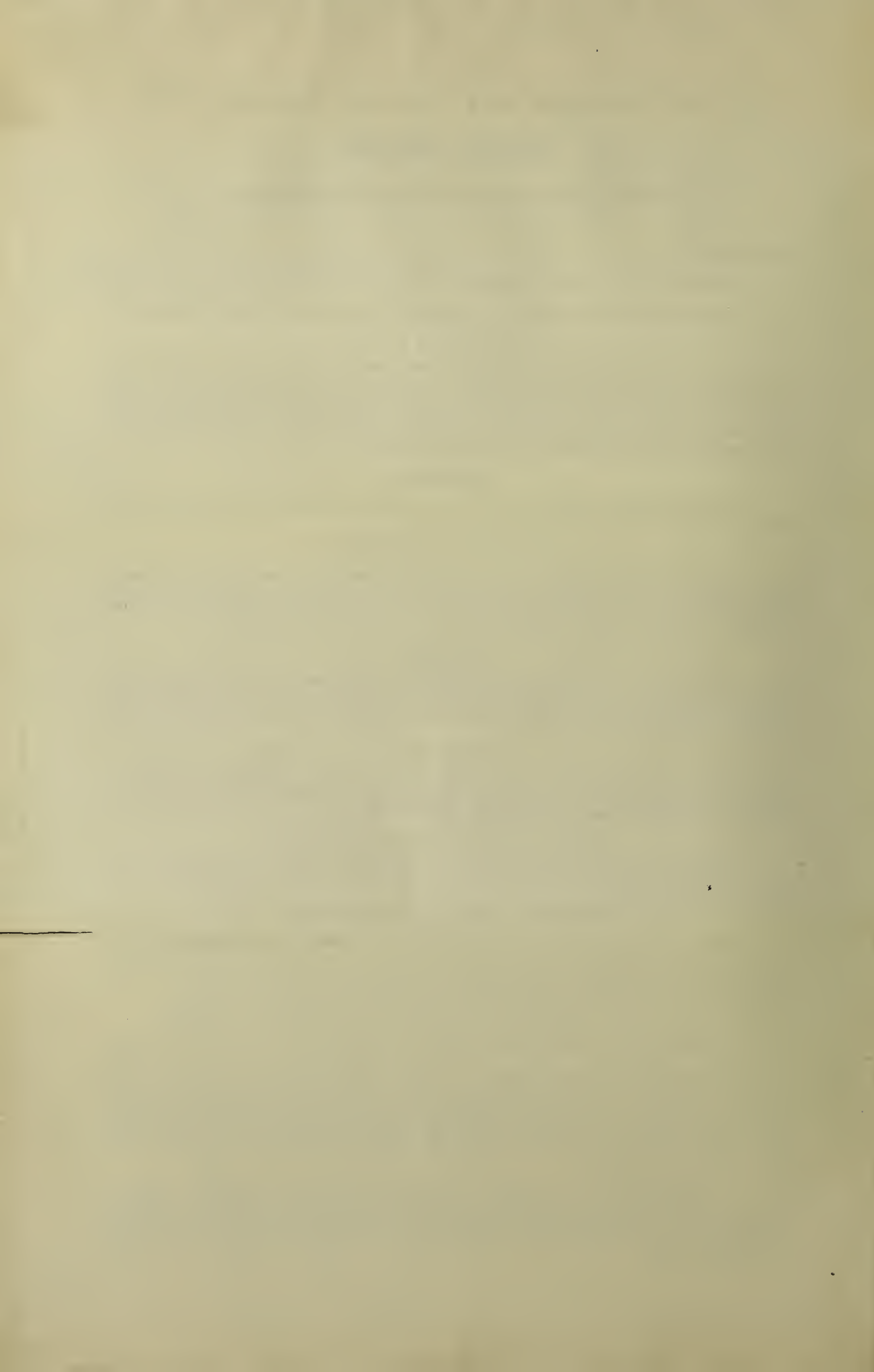
Since my appointment I am becoming acquainted with the District; I have visited nearly every house in which a case of Scarlet Fever or Typhoid has occurred. I have made an inspection of the sanitary condition of the dwellings in which such cases have occurred, and the householders have been supplied with disinfectants and instructed in their use with a view to check the spread of the disease.

ACTION TAKEN TO CHECK THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

Isolation, more or less imperfect, with a liberal use of disinfectants were the only means available.

MEASLES.—278 cases were reported. A number of cases occurred in June and July amongst the children in Grittenham; these children being attacked during the holidays it was luckily not necessary to close the School. An epidemic of measles broke out in Wootton Bassett in September and October, and the Schools were closed with a view of checking the spread of the disease. Most of the cases occurring in cottages, isolation was impossible. Three deaths occurred, but were all due to complications. Most of the cases were of a mild type.

SCARLET FEVER.—27 cases were reported, the majority, 23, occurred in Purton and Cricklade. As these cases were confined to one locality, in Purton, it was not considered necessary to close the schools, the scholars in infected neighbourhood being kept from school. Three cases only occurred in the Wootton Bassett District, one being in Tockenham and one in Lyneham, in neither case did the disease spread.



SMALL POX.—Two cases were reported, one which occurred at Lydiard Green and was removed to Swindon Fever Hospital on February 14th. The house was visited by my predecessor, (vide Report Book,) who found it had already been disinfected. The disease did not spread.

The other case occurred in High Street, Cricklade, March 26th. This patient came from an infected house in Gloucester where three persons were suffering from the disease. The patient and the family were quarantined in their own house. I visited the house on May 1st in conjunction with their own medical attendant, all the inmates appearing quite well, and the household having been quarantined since March 26th, they were given liberty. No other case occurred. The infected bedding, clothes, &c., were burned, and the premises disinfected and limewashed.

DIPHTHERIA.—Five cases were reported, four occurring in one family at Bradenstoke, who were apparently all attacked simultaneously. I visited the premises but could not trace the origin of the disease. The other case occurred at Purton previous to my appointment.

TYPHOID FEVER.—With a doubtful supply of water at Purton and Cricklade it is eminently satisfactory to be able to report that only one case of Typhoid Fever has occurred in the whole District during the past year. In this case the household supply was obtained from the Thames at the bottom of the Town. The sanitary arrangements of the house were not altogether satisfactory.

PUERPERAL FEVER.—One case reported at Purton. I am informed the nurse was cautioned against the danger of continuing her professional duties.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES HOSPITAL.

The cottage at Flaxlands could be used in case of great emergency.

CAUSES AND DISTRIBUTION OF DISEASE.

The crowded state of many of the cottages, the impossibility of isolation, and the neglect of immediate notification, are chiefly accountable for the spread of infectious disease.

REMEDIAL CAUSES.

The erection of a better class of cottage, improved water supply and improved drainage, and early notification of cases of infectious disease would tend to diminish the number of cases in the District. I believe the fact that parents do not regard Measles or "Scarlatina" as grave diseases accounts for their neglect in notifying such cases. Notification, to be of any use, should be immediate.

SANITARY REQUIREMENTS OF THE DISTRICT.

The Council have, I believe, determined on building an Isolation Hospital. It would be well I think, if a Travelling Disinfecting Apparatus were established in connection with the Hospital.

Statistical information, births, deaths, &c., are enclosed, and the Report of the Sanitary Inspector.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

Francis George Wride,

February, 1897.

Medical Officer of Health.

WOOTTON BASSETT.

